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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN
RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Letter dated 12 January 1993 from the Permanent
Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a message from His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, delivered on 11 January on the occasion of National Children's Day, and to request you to arrange for it to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments".

(Signed) Hamadi KHOUINI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Message delivered on 11 January 1993, National Children's Day,
by the President of Tunisia

As we celebrate National Children's Day, it is my pleasure to salute the children of Tunisia, boys and girls, whether here or abroad, and to congratulate them on this holiday which is for them.

We have decided to celebrate National Children's Day on 11 January each year in order to honour our children, who embody our hopes for the future, and to confirm the constant concern for and kindly interest in them which we have shown since the outset of the change with the aim of providing them with the conditions for healthy and harmonious development and a well-rounded education.

The choice of this date, which coincides with the signing of the instruments of ratification of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a fresh indication of our profound belief in the inalienable rights of the child to protection and development and our determination to establish these rights, to protect them and to provide all necessary safeguards for them.

Tunisia, which participated in the United Nations conference on children and was one of the first States to ratify the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, is doing everything in its power to give effect to its principles.

In accordance with the commitments assumed under the Convention, Tunisia has adopted a national plan of action and a series of practical programmes covering the decade 1991-2001. This plan reinforces the radical and comprehensive reforms carried out with respect to children since 7 November 1987, which have entailed, in particular, the establishment of a Ministry for Youth and Children and a High Council on Children and to initiate a wide-ranging reform of education, including the establishment of schools of basic education and provisions governing compulsory schooling. These reforms have made it possible to carry out prenatal and post-natal preventive health programmes and, more generally, to provide effective wide-ranging health care for mothers and children in urban and rural areas alike. In addition, the plan seeks to promote complementarity between women's role within the family and their role in society, in recognition of the fact that the family constitutes both the natural environment for the child's development and the basic unit of society.

Children facing difficult conditions have also benefited from this reform through the establishment of a Superior Council on the Handicapped and a Child Support Fund.

The reforms begun in the new era with the aim of guaranteeing the rights of the child to life, health, food, schooling, education, training and social integration are in complete harmony with the provisions and objectives of the

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Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The reforms are also consonant with international efforts aimed at devising strategies for ensuring the balanced development of children and seeing to it that children are accorded the place to which they are entitled.

The growing interest in the world in children confirms that we have been in the forefront of efforts to guarantee the rights of the child, which constitute an essential pillar of human rights.

By guaranteeing the rights of the child to survival, protection and development, we have given human rights, which are respected in Tunisia, another fundamental dimension which cannot but reinforce fundamental freedoms, both individual and collective, which we have begun to codify, promote and enforce.

The survival, protection and development of children are not just national or regional matters. They are of concern to mankind as a whole.

I would therefore appeal to the universal conscience that is embodied in States, organizations, voluntary agencies and individuals to contribute to the search for urgent solutions to the problems, indeed the tragedies, which afflict certain parts of the world and which threaten the existence, health, nutrition and education of children.

Our thoughts go out on this occasion to the "children of the stones", the children of the heroic intifadah in the occupied Arab territories, and to the children of Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These dramatic situations call for vigorous humanitarian action and a spirit of active and effective solidarity to save the oppressed children and safeguard their right to life and protection.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to and high esteem for the children of Tunisia, who have responded enthusiastically and generously to our appeal for donations to help the children of Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Their spontaneous reaction is yet another reflection of the humanitarian conscience of Tunisians and their constant readiness to help in alleviating the sufferings of the children of those countries.

Protection of the rights of the child and respect for the physical security and moral welfare of the child consists in viewing children and fully fledged human beings and treating them accordingly. In other words, children are to be considered assets of unparalleled worth.

Clearly, the family, schools and associations concerned with the education of children have a crucial role to play in fostering such attitudes and in passing them on to the younger generations, while at the same time

exercising their primary functions for the welfare, education, instruction and guidance of children and for the promotion of cultural and patriotic values among children so that they will become imbued with these values and learn early in life to love their country and remain committed to the lofty ideals of mankind.

Such institutions also have a duty to create a climate that is conducive to and the conditions necessary for the development of the abilities of children, the flowering of their talents and the formation of their personalities in a balanced way and also, above all, for instilling in them the pleasure of study and a thirst for knowledge, for the great challenge for our country's future consists in acquiring skills, mastering knowledge in its many and varied forms and understanding the reality of living beings and the meaning of things. By giving the rising generations a comprehensive training we are preparing Tunisia's future, a future which we all hope will be bright. In so doing, we are helping to build a better world.
